

---

**From:** CAEOP CT <caeopct@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 21, 2014 4:40 PM  
**To:** AppropriationTestimony  
**Subject:** CT Public Act 12-40

February 21, 2014

Dear Senator Bye and Representative Walker,

My name is Kimberly Gorman, and I am writing to you regarding **Connecticut Public Act 12-40**. Currently, I work as a program administrator/counselor in the Student Support Services (SSS) program at the University of Connecticut. SSS is a federally funded TRiO program whose mission is to increase the enrollment, retention, and graduation of low-income, first-generation, and/or underrepresented students at UConn. Previously, I worked as an Educational Assistant in the Admissions Office at Manchester Community College, where I counseled students on the enrollment process, advised transfer students, and engaged in outreach and recruitment. In addition, I am a Connecticut community college graduate who was required to take a remedial math course.

I **support Connecticut Public Act 12-40**; however, I have concerns related to appropriate funding to ensure that students who are impacted by this act receive the academic and support services they need to be successful. An undertaking this important and vast must provide adequate funding to hire faculty and staff who are trained and knowledgeable about the student population they are teaching and serving. Having worked at a community college, I am well aware of how dangerously understaffed student service offices are due to operating on shoestring budgets. I also understand the unique challenges that many community college students and university students coming from low-income, urban areas face. These include:

- Being underprepared for college-level work and the rigors of university academics
- Frustration, lack of academic confidence, and even panic upon realizing that they are underprepared and unable to compete effectively with their better prepared peers
- A lack of family understanding and support about what college entails because they are the first in their family to pursue a higher education
- Stress from the family being in near-constant financial crisis due to its low-income status
- A sense of obligation to contribute financially to the family, as well as care for younger siblings
- If a low-income minority student, a sense of isolation amongst white and/or more affluent peers, and also having a lack of faculty that looks like them and shares their culture
- If a non-traditional student, balancing the demands of family and work

Helping students thrive under these circumstances is no easy task. It requires high-quality academic and personal support services, extensive one-on-one counseling and advising (including intrusive advising), instructors who understand the unique needs of their students and are willing to go the extra mile, innovative programming, and collaboration amongst academic and student affairs divisions. All of this requires appropriate funding to hire the necessary faculty and staff to make it possible.

**Underfunding vital academic and support services is nearly as detrimental to student success as no funding at all.**

Underfunding results in departments and divisions being understaffed and, therefore, poorly equipped to provide necessary services, innovative programming, and educational opportunities to all students who would benefit. It does not allow for professional development and training of faculty and staff. It makes collaboration amongst departments and even institutions more challenging. Programming that might be developed falls by the wayside because faculty and staff are too busy engaged in their day-to-day work to implement new initiatives.

I have been on both sides of the coin – I have worked at a community college and saw the negative impact that underfunding had on students, and I now work for an institution and program with excellent funding and see how greatly it benefits the students in terms of adequate staffing, programming, and academic support services. **I sincerely hope that the state of Connecticut will make a serious and substantial financial commitment to ensure that its community colleges and state university system will have the resources they need to successfully implement Public Act 12-40.**

I also suggest taking a look at what TRiO programs offer and perhaps collaborating with them, as they have been successfully working with low-income, first-generation, underprepared and/or underrepresented high school and college students since Lyndon B. Johnson declared his War on Poverty in the 1960s. These programs include Upward Bound, Educational Talent Search, Student Support Services, McNair Scholars Program, and Educational Opportunities Centers. Connecticut currently has 15 TRiO programs at the following institutions: University of Connecticut, Wesleyan University, Fairfield University, University of Bridgeport, Central Connecticut State University, Sacred Heart University, Western Connecticut State University, and Stamford Public Schools; additionally, there are Educational Opportunity Centers, which serve displaced or underemployed workers from families with incomes under \$33,075, at ten of the community colleges.

Thank you for your time. I deeply appreciate your efforts on behalf of the state's neediest citizens.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Gorman

--

Chair, Government Relations Subcommittee

---

"Connecticut Association of Educational Opportunity Programs"

CAEOP is a statewide volunteer organization committed to promoting post-secondary educational access and retention for populations traditionally under-represented in higher education

[www.CAEOPCT.org](http://www.CAEOPCT.org)